

Memories of World War II  
By Elwin Barnes  
Condensed from his Oral Histories

(I served in World War II. I served in) North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and France. I was off and on ships. We went on a ship over there. We landed at Casa Blanca and then went up the west coast to French Morocco and all up through there. One invasion we went on ships to invade other country landings.

No.(I was not a foot fighter) I went over with Patton into Africa—George S. Patton. We got up to Rabat—I think it was the 1st armor went up into Caserine Pass and ran into a trap. They were nearly wiped out. Then they started pulling troops from replacements out of the 2nd armored to replace those killed and equipment lost. They started splitting us up. I got into the trucking outfit. We had the trucks and we had ducks. You have heard of the ducks haven't you? We'd make landings in the ducks. We would put troops across onto land—crossing rivers. We crossed to Po River. In fact a little while back I saw on the Oliver North's War stories where my outfit was crossing the Po River into Italy.

(I served for) Four years and four months, to be exact;  
From March 21, 1941 to July 21, 1945.

So were you in the war when the Armistice took place?

Oh yes, when the European theater was done. In fact, I was there for a little after. I was in the trucks and we were moving refugees back and forth up from Austria and brought some back from Austria. The civilians would try to avoid the front lines, break through and go back or avoid it so there were a lot of misplaced people. We would truck them back and forth.

A lot of things (and experiences stand out in my mind.) I could tell you quite a few stories. One thing that bothered me more than anything—I was at one time a mess sergeant too. The refugees coming back were bare footed and cold and were starving. It was Naples, actually, Italy. They would come in and fight over the scraps left over from the mess kits. We would feed them and what was left was put into this can. These people would fight over that. Commanding officer told me to keep them out of there. Wouldn't even let them have the scraps. I had to keep them out. That bothered me a great deal.

On the Anzio Beach head, we had bodies stacked up in the sun—rotting in the sun. They were shelling us so much they couldn't bury them, so they would just stack up. When you go in there you carried your body bag with you, actually a mattress cover is what they called it. When they were killed they would put them in this mattress cover. They would haul them in and stack them out there. They were rotting in the sun.

(We would carry the mattress cover on us.) Oh yes, everyone did.

(We had to wear Dog Tags.) You had to have them all the time. That's how they identified some of them, for the bodies. That's what they were for. They had your number, your religion, and I don't remember what else. I still have mine at home.

**Tell me about that little dent that goes in the dog tags?**

I don't have any idea of what it is.

(I'm surprised you don't know that. My husband told me that that's where they drove that into the teeth of the victim, or the soldier that lost their life. You dig it into the teeth and bounce it in with the butt of your gun so that would identify that body.)

**When you got home from the war, was it a jubilant home coming and that kind of thing? Did you get greeted downtown?**

The only ones who knew I was home, were my folks. I walked in on them. When it was over, it was over. Before I left over there, we flew from Pisa, Italy down to Port Renio in North Africa. From North Africa we went to South Africa, Daccra, then we flew over to Natal, Brazil. We stayed over night there. It was July. It was their winter there and it was wet—clothes just soaking wet. We flew up to Florida where they put us on a train and we came home. I thumbed a ride home.

Nobody picked us up. Someone gave me a ride. I was alone. I was the only one in this area. Some of the others went to other areas. When we went in, there were myself, Keith Davis, Ernest Goff, and Howard Robinson. We all went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for training then. When the three-month training was over with, I think Ernest Goff and Howard Robinson went to Fort Lewis, Washington. I went to Fort Benning Georgia. Keith Davis got killed over there. Jess Fox's son, Morris I believe, got killed over there.

I don't know about this nowadays. I better not get into that. Sometimes we feel like that this is the only war we ever fought. I'm not looking for any glory, I did my job. We have a spoiled

generation coming up. They go over there for three months or a year—they got a call and they have email and all of that stuff. When I was over there we used to get maybe five or six letters all at once and then we would go two or three months without anything. Then we would get one or two and then go a month or two or three months without getting any mail at all.

Yes, it was mid afternoon.(when I arrived home).

No, they just ran out to see. They were glad to see me and I was glad to see them.